

RICHARD CRUM THE VERSATILE

By DOROTHY WESSON



The above picture shows Dick Crum and a Croat dancing partner at St. Paul's famous "Festival of Nations" of about four years ago. At that time, Miss Constance Fisher, a social service worker in St. Paul who viewed the festival, sent this picture reporting her amazement at Dick's versatility, who she didn't know. Wrote Connie on the back of the picture: "This is the young fellow who was equally at home as a Latin as he was a Pole or anything else." Yes, that's him alright. VFB. (Foto—Thatcher Studios)

Seldom does a new Folk Dance Leader find quick acceptance and win the immediate respect of those leaders who have been doing conscientious work in the dance field for many years. While no leader has the right to set himself up as a judge of another's ability, it is generally felt that the newcomer should fight his way to the top and prove himself thoroughly before he is accepted. An exception to this seems to be Dick Crum of St. Paul, Minn., who at 25, is rising steadily in the estimation of those who share his chosen field—the folklore and dance of the Balkans.

Dick grew up in a city which has many distinct nationality colonies and one of the most closely knit of these is the Romanian settlement where he was born and raised, although of German-Irish extraction himself. At an early age, he played with Romanian speaking youngsters and attended language classes with them in the Church school, thereby winning respect of the "old country" Romanian parents of his playmates. Things an outsider would have thought of as "quaint" were to him a part of the daily life of his friends and created a desire in him to learn more about their dances and culture. Since St. Paul has an active International Institute, whose purpose is to encourage understanding among ofreign born Americans, it is not surprising that he joined the organization and soon became one of its most active volunteer members. From then on, the fascination of languages led him to cultivate

friendships among the other nationalities, and this coupled with an interest in dancing, led to his being invited to joint various ethnic dance groups in the city.

Chief among these were the Romanian, Irish, Czechoslovak, Croatian and Mexican. Where the average person would feel lost and ill at ease, an inborn like of people enabled him to get through to these naturally cautious "old country" folk. Sensing in him a real desire to learn, and not merely idle curiosity, they made him welcome in their homes and at parties and celebrations.

Every three years in St. Paul, the International Institute presents the Festival of Nations, drawing together almost 50 nationality groups to decorate the huge Auditorium, cook and serve food specialists of their homelands, and put on a four day program of music and dances. In the 1949 Festival, Dick had charge of the Latin American section of the program, and danced with several other nationality groups as well.

Summer of that year, he spent in Mexico, studying under noted teachers the Folk Dances and culture of Mexico, and perfecting his knowledge of the language. After his return, he was called upon to arrange many programs dealing with Latin America—several Mexican Independence Day Celebrations, the Macalester College Pageant "Mi Tierra", dealing with the history of Mexico, and the Montevideo, Minnesota Fiesta Days. This is an annual celebration built around an exchange of greetings and gifts between Montevideo, Uruguay and its Minnesota namesake. By this time he was able to carry on conversations in an unbelievable number of languages for one so young—German, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, Serbo-Croatian, Russian and Swedish.

It is not surprising that his interests at the University of Minnesota began to direct themselves toward the field of Ethnology, with special attention to language and the dance, and he found help and inspiration in his continuing contacts as a volunteer with the foreign groups at the International Institute. In the fall of 1953, Dick was granted a scholarship at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, Pa. as a dancer with the Tamburitians, a Yugoslav folk music and dance group. Kolos had always interested him, and the time he spent with the "Tammies" gave him ample opportunity not only to learn new kolos, but to acquire background in the other phases of Yugoslavian culture. In exchange he was able to offer them advice and help in staging the dances of other nationalities which the group also includes in its program.

Early in 1952, Dick was called back to St. Paul to be Program Director of the Festival of Nations that year. The job entailed coordinating music and dance programs of the participating groups, plus encouraging previously unorganized groups to enter the Festival. Taking part were 32 dance groups, and though the misunderstandings to be smoothed out were many, and the work involved unbelievable, it was an invaluable experience and a very great honor. A month later, he rejoined the Tamburitians to accompany them on their concert tour of Yugoslavia. During the summer spent there, the group turned more and more to Dick, because of his excellent background in dance, to gather new material from leaders in the dance field in Yugoslavia. He tells of many late night sessions with very generous dance people learning style, steps and background on kolos hitherto unknown in this country. Without this help he could never have brought back the dozens of new kolos he knows and is teaching, although greatly limited by the lack of recording for many of them. As choreographer for the Tamburitians, he has made many of these dances the featured items for their concerts in the U. S. for the 1952-53 and 1953-1954 seasons.

When he returned to St. Paul, he resumed study at the University of Minnesota, and at the same time was em-



YUGOS DOING LITH DANCES

Everyone is doing the Yugoslav Kolo, but the Yugo's themselves are doing Lithuanian dances. The above picture is of the quintet from Duquesne University Tamburitians in the Lenciu-gelis pose. Shown in front (to r) Mary aJne McGreevey and Geraldine Woss, in back; Rose Puskarich, Bill Vergot and Audrey Padej, scholarship student in music. During this next tour through Yugoslavia Lenciu-gelis will be a part of the groups repertoire. Dick Crum did most of the training this year. The above costumes were made by Dorothy Wesson of Minneapolis. Nice job, Dotty.

ployed by the International Institute in two capacities—as teacher of English to the foreign born and as an instructor in Recreational Folk Dance classes. For the past year he has been teaching three different kolo groups locally. During the summer of 1953, while attending the Herman's Maine Folk Camp, he was asked to teach several sessions in kolo, and later spent a week teaching Balkan dances and folklore at Oglebay Institute, West Virginia. Beside these, he also taught kolos at the Croatian Summer School in Gary, Indiana and still managed to find time to train the dancers in the Tamburitians organization for this season, which meant that his Twin City friends saw but little of him.

All set to graduate in March with a degree in languages (Spanish - Russian) he decided to put it off in order to return to Yugoslavia for three or four months—along this time—but under the auspices of the Tamburitians, to do further research into the kolo, and is now on his way across.

With this extensive background, Dick still feels he's only scratched the surface. The elements which account for kolos, their style and their character, are very complex. You can't, in his opinion, study dance or any other phase of a culture without becoming aware of the impossibility of reducing everything to counts, measures and formulae.

Looking at kolo from a recreational point of view. Dick sums it up in these words, "Kolos are an ideal type of recreational folk dance because of their simplicity, and the wonderful "together" feeling they give; plus, of course, the very helpful fact that partners are almost never needed. And besides, kolos are FUN! When you can forget your feet, shout, laugh with a neighbor and start jokes going around the circle, the real lift and enjoyment of kolos begins. It is too bad many folks shy away from kolos, because they think that "KOLO" means "basic step," when actually only a few Yugoslavian dances have this step. After all, kolo like other folk dances, were and are

the recreation of a living people. They grew out of the life of an essentially simple folk who have had more than their share of oppression. As such, kolos are really simple dances, and only in a few areas did difficult steps develop. Of course, some are harder than others, and good style is not learned over night, but these are challenges for a later date. By the time a dancer is ready to tackle the "hard ones", he will have caught so much of the kolo spirit from the simpler dances, that the advanced ones will be real fun to learn. My biggest thrill comes when a hesitant dancer joins the kolo circle, suddenly realizes that kolos are not hard, and then comes back for more. You'd be surprised at how many of the so-called "kolo-fiends" start out that way."

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MORE ABOUT THE AMBER AND THE LITHS

As told by Tacitus (54-117 A.D.) in GERMANY (Excerpts)

Harvard Classics—Translation by Thomas Gordon
Upon the right of the Suevian Sea the Aestyan (ancient name for Lithuanians - VFB) nations reside... They worship the Mother of the Gods (Sun - VFB). As the characteristic of their national superstition, they wear the image of wild boars (Tauras - VFB) This alone serves them for arms, this is the safeguard of all, and by this every worshipper of the Goddess is secured even amidst his foes. Rare among them is the use of weapons of iron, but frequent that of clubs. In producing of grain and the other fruits of the Earth, they labor with more assiduity and patience than is suitable to the usual laziness of Germans. Nay, they even search the deep, and of all the rest are the only people who gather amber... and find it amongst the shallows and upon the very shore... They have neither learned nor do they inquire what is its nature or from what cause is it produced. In truth it lay long neglected amongst the other gross discharges of the sea; till from our luxury, it gained a name and value. To themselves it is of no use. They gather it rough, they expose it in pieces coarse and unpolished, and for it receive a price with wonder. You should however conceive it to be a liquor issuing from the trees, for that in the transparent substance are often seen birds and other animals, such as at first stuck in the soft gum, and by it, as it hardened, became quite enclose.

Of public diversions they have but one sort, and in all their meetings the same is still exhibited. Young men, such as make it their pastime, fling themselves naked and dance amongst sharp swords and the deadly points of javelins. From habit they acquire their skill and from their skill a graceful manner; yet from hence draw no gain or hire. Though his adventurous gaiety has its reward, namely that of pleasing the spectators (The Liths were graceful dancers even then. - VFB).

VILTIS

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